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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01

SAB-01 AID-05 PC-01 IO-13 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 FAA-00

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5730

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJ: INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

1. INDIAN PRESS BEGINNING WITH "INSIDER" STORY BY MADRAS
HINDU CORRESPONDENT G.K. REDDY APRIL 16 HAS DAILY CARRIED
REPORTS ON THE REPLY BY MRS. GANDHI APRIL 11 TO BHUTTO'S
LETTER OF MARCH 27. MEA BRIEFED CORRESPONDENTS APRIL 19 ON THE
LETTER AND ISSUED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT. THE PROBLEM HAS
BEEN THAT THE INTENT AND FLAVOR OF INDIAN REPLY HAS BEEN
VEILED AND REPORTED SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTIONILY BY DIFFERENT
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PRESS STORIES.

POL COUNSELOR APPOINTMENT WITH MEA JOINT SECRETARY (PAKISTAN), AT WHICH WE HOPED TO GET SOME CLARIFICATION, SCHEDULED FOR TODAY WAS CANCELLED AT LAST MINUTE BY MEA AND POSTPONED UNTIL FRIDAY. AT PRESENT, THEREFORE, WE WILL BASICALLY ONLY SUMMARIZE BELOW WHAT OUR UNDERSTANDING IS OF THE INDIAN PROPOSAL.

2. ACCORDING TO MEA SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT APRIL 19, MRS GANDHI "HAS SAID THAT INDIA WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS PENDING MATTERS SUCH AS AIR LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, OVERFLIGHTS AND THE RESUMPTION OF RAIL AND ROAD COMMUNICATION. THE PM HAS SAID THAT INDIA IS PREPARED TO GO FURTHER AND DISCUSS MEASURES FOR THE RESTORATION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS."

AFTER NOTING BHUTTO'S WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW ICAO CASE AND NOTING THAT INDIA HAD MADE THIS SUGGESTION EARLIER LAST YEAR, THE MEA STATEMENT CONCLUDED: "IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE PURPOSEFUL EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE CLIMATE OF INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS BY FIRMLY CURBING PROPAGANDA WHICH CREATES MISTRUST OF EACH OTHER AND DESISTING FROM STEPS HOSTILE TO THE INTERESTS OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES. RECENT STATEMENTS FROM PAKISTAN HAVE CAUSED CONCERN IN INDIA AND ARE HARDLY CONDUCTIVE TO THE FULFILMENT OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT."

3. G.K. REDDY APRIL 20 STORY NOTES THAT IT IS NOW PAKISTAN'S TURN TO RESPOND TO INDIAN OFFER FOR COMPREHENSIVE DISCUSSIONS ON ALL OUTSTANDING ISSUES, NOT JUST "MERE RESUMPTION OF OVERFLIGHTS." THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE HAD TO BE CREATED FOR SUCH DISCUSSIONS, HE WRITES, AND THERE COULD BE "NO MEANINGFUL DISCUSSIONS WHILE PAKISTAN CONTINUED TO INDULGE IN HOSTILE PROPAGANDA AGAINST INDIA." THE "MAIN HURDLE" WAS STILL THE "MENTAL RESERVATIONS THAT PAKISTAN CONTINUES TO ENTERTAIN ABOUT THE VERY CONCEPT OF DURABLE PEACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT. THE MERE WITHDRAWAL OF THE (ICAO) CASE NOW CANNOT REALLY CLEAR THE WAY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REST OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT UNLESS THERE IS A BASIC CHANGE IN MR. BHUTTO'S ATTITUDE TO THE WHILE QUESTION OF INDO-PAK RECONCILIATION...IN WITHDRAWING THE CASE, PAKISTAN HAS TO REAFFIRM ITS COMMITMENT TO THIS PRINCIPLE (OF

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BILATERAL SETTLEMENT OF ALL OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS) FOR SETTLING THE OTHER ISSUES IN THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT."

4. ON THE SPECIFIC SUBJECT OF NORMALIZATION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, REDDY, IN ANOTHER PIECE APRIL 17, COMMENTED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY "IF PAKISTAN IS REALLY INTERESTED IN USING THIS AS A STEPPING STONE FOR RESOLVING OTHER OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS." THE OVERFLIGHT ISSUE, HOWEVER, CANNOT

BE SETTLED EXCEPT AS PART OF A WIDER PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION.

WHAT HAS ANNOYED INDIA HAS NOT ONLY BEEN PAKISTAN'S "DOUBLE-FACED DIPLOMACY" BUT ITS "INTENSE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN" AGAINST INDIA. INDIA MUST BE "SATISFIED" THAT PAKISTAN WILL GIVE UP ITS "MENDACIOUS PROPAGANDA" AND "HONOR THE AGREEMENTS ALREADY ARRIVED AT UNDER THE SIMLA PACT, WHILE SEEKING A SETTLEMENT OF THE REMAINING PROBLEMS." REDDY NOTES THAT ASIDE FROM IMPLEMENTING EXISTING AGREEMENTS ON TRADE, TRAVEL, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, RAIL, ROAD AND SEA LINKS AND CULTURAL RELATIONS, SUCH MATTERS AS MILITARY DISENGAGEMENT ALONG THE WESTERN BORDER, DEMARCATION OF THE MARITIME BOUNDARY, THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF BILATERALISM IN SETTTLING THE SALAL DAM PROBLEM, AND OVERLAND TRANSIT FACILITIES REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT. INDIA CANNOT PRCEED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO GO AHEAD WITH THE SIMLA DIALOGUE JUST BY RESOLVING THE OVERFLIGHT ISSUE. IN HIS EARLIEST PIECE IN THE CURRENT SERIES ON APRIL 16, REDDY NOTES FURTHER THAT "MERE RESTORATION OF DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WILL NOT SERVE ANY POSITIVE PURPOSE UNLES THERE IS A MATCHING DESIRE FOR BETTER RELATIONS."

5. OTHER INDIAN PAPERS, PRESUMABLY RELYING ON OTHER SOURCES OR ON THE MEA SPOKESMAN ALONE FOCUSED MORE DIRECTLY AND POSITIVELY ON POSSIBILITIES FOR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THE TIMES OF INDIA APRIL 20, FOR EXAMPLE, LEADS WITH "INDIA READY FOR TALKS TO RESTORE TIES WITH PINDI" AND EMPHASIZES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MRS GANDHI'S REPLY TO BHUTTO LIES IN HER REFERRING TO THIS POSSIBILITY. THE NATIONAL HERALD AND INDIAN EXPERSSS GIVE SIMILAR EMPHASIS IN THEIR STORIES, WHILE OTHER DELHI PAPERS MERELY NOTE THAT INDIA HAD PROPOSED "TALKS" WITH GOP. (THE PRO-CPI PATRIOT IN APRIL 19 STORY HAD INTERPRETED MRS GANDHI'S LETTER AS A PROPOSAL TO "EXCHANGE
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ENVOYS"; IT SHIFTED TO HEADLINE FOCUSING ON "PAK PROPAGANDA VITIATING CLIMATE" IN FOLLOW-UP STORY APRIL 20.)

6. COMMENT: EGYPTIAN EMBASSY COUNSELLOR TELLS US NEW INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO EGYPT, ASHOK CHIB (FORMER PAK AFFAIRS JOINT SECRETARY IN MEA), TOLD HIM LAST WEEK THAT TIDE WAS MOVING IN FAVOR OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH GOP. WE HAVE NOTED SIMILAR COMMENTS BY OTHER SENIOR MEA OFFICIALS FROM SEPARATE SOURCES. THE LANGUAGE OF MRS GANDHI'S LETTER INDEED IS MORE FORTHCOMING THAN PREVIOUS GOI MESSAGES, BUT STILL SEEMS VEILED WITH NUMBER OF CAVEATS AND ESCAPE CLAUSES WHICH WILL LEAVE IT UP TO GOI WHETHER TO MOVE AHEAD OR NOT. WE ARE STILL UNCERTAIN WHETHER INDIANS ARE AIMING TOWARD CONCLUSIVE RESOLUTIONS ON ALL OUTSTANDING ISSUES BEFORE AGREEMENT ON NORMALIZATION OR WILL PRESS PAKS FOR NEW

"RETREAT" ON THE SALAL DAM ISSUE (I.E., AWAY FROM REFERRAL TO NEUTRAL ARBITRATOR), OR INDEED ARE ONLY SEEKING TO REGAIN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INITIATIVE. BHUTTO'S PROMPT RESPONSE WILL CERTAINLY ENCOURAGE THOSE WITHIN GOI FAVORING IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS.

7. THE QUESTION INEVITABLY ARISES AS TO WHETHER MOVE TOWARD PAKISTAN AND DECISION ON EXCHANGING RELATIONS WITH CHINA ARE RELATED. AT THIS POINT, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO SPECULATE, BUT WE MAY HAVE SOMETHING MORE TO SAY ON THIS SUBJECT LATER IN THE WEEK AFTER FURTHER CONVERSATIONS LOCALLY. SAXBE

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